

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

USEC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 9247

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: PSOE CONGRESS: THE FIRST DAY

SUMMARY: THE PSOE CONGRESS GOT OFF TO AN ENTHUSIASTIC, EMOTIONAL AND ORDERLY START DECEMBER 5, A DAY MARKED PRIMARILY BY SPEECHES OF GREETING FROM FOREIGN SOCIALIST DIGNITARIES AND A MODERATE ADDRESS BY PART FIRST SECRETARY FELIPE GONZALEZ. CLOSED-DOOR COMMITTEE SESSIONS ARE NOW UNDERWAY AND WILL CONTINUE DECEMBER 6 AND DECEMBER 7. THE NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WILL BE ANNOUNCED AND THE CONGRESS WILL ADJOURN ON DECEMBER 8. END SUMMARY.

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1. BENEATH THE SLOGAN "SOCIALISM IS LIBERY," THE SPANISH

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY (PSOE) KICKED OFF ITS TWENTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS, AND FIRST ON SPANISH SOIL IN OVER FORTY YEARS, DECEMBER 5 IN MADRID. THE PARTY HAD PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR AND BEEN GRANTED GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORIZATION FOR THE ONCE-POSTPONED CONGRESS. SOME 3000 DELEGATES, FOREIGN SOCIALIST GUESTS, OBSERVERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PRESS WERE ON HAND FOR THE FIRST DAY'S EVENTS, WHICH CONSISTED OF SPEECHES BY LEADERS OF MANY OF THE FOREIGN DELEGATIONS, AN ADDRESS BY PSOE FIRST SECRETARY FELIPE GONZALEZ, AND THE ELECTION OF OFFICERS TO PRESIDE OVER THE REMAINING THREE DAYS OF THE CONGRESS.

2. SPEECHES FOR ALL TASTES. ALL THE INTERVENTIONS BY FOREIGN GUESTS WERE WELL RECEIVED. AMONG THE MOST NOTABLE SPEECHES: --THE MODERATION AND FATHERLY ADVICE OF BRANDT, OBVIOUSLY DEEPLY TOUCHED BY HIS PRESENCE AT THE CONGRESS, ELICITED TUMULTUOUS APPLAUSE; --PALME'S HORTATORY REMARKS BROUGHT CHANTS OF "PAL-ME, PAL-ME; --NENNI'S REMINISCENCES PROMPTED THE SINGING OF THE "INTERNATIONALE"; --THE BRIEF, LOW-KEY ADDRESS OF SALGADO ZENHA, FIST IN THE AIR AND GRINNING A LITTLE SHEEPISHLY, EVOKED AN AFFECTIONATE RESPONSE; --THE HEATED, EMOTIONAL REMARKS OF SULE (CHILEAN RADICAL PARTY) WERE ANSWERED BY A STANDING OVATION AND CHANTS OF "PINOCHEZ ASESINO" AND "ALLENDE PRESENTE"; AND --MITTERAND'S CALL FOR "FLATTERING THE PYRENEES WITH THE STRENGTH OF OUR COMMONLY HELD IDEAS" EVOKED SUSTAINED APPLAUSE.

3. A SINGLE CONTRETEMPS. ALL GUEST DELEGATIONS, WHICH INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER PARTIES OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, INCLUDING THE ISRAELI LABOR PARTY, AS WELL AS DELEGATES FROM THE ALGERIAN FLN, PLO, FRENTE POLISARIO, VENEZUELA'S ACCION DEMOCRATICA, CHILEAN RADICAL AND SOCIALIST PARTIES, AND THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF ITALY, CUBA, RUMANIA, AND YUGOSLAVIA, RECEIVED WARM, STANDING OVATIONS UPON THEIR PRESENTATION TO THE ASSEMBLED DELEGATES. THE MOST RESPECTFUL RECEPTIONS WERE TENDERED BRANDT AND MITTERAND WHILE THE MOST EMOTIONAL WERE GIVEN THE CHILEANS, THE PLO AND THE FRENTE POLISARIO. THE ONLY DISCORDANT NOTE IN AN OTHERWISE ORDERLY SESSION

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OCCURRED WHEN THE FLN, PLO AND POLISARIO DELEGATES WALKED OUT AS THE ISRAELI LABOR SPOKESMAN STEPPED TO THE ROSTRUM. THIS PROVOKED SOMETHING OF A DIVISION AMONG THE PSOE DELEGATES THEMSELVES, BUT THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ROSE TO A MAN TO APPLAUD THE ISRAELI SPEAKER AND ORDER WAS QUICKLY RESTORED. THE THREE ARAB DELGATIONS LATER RETURNED TO THEIR SEATS.

4. GONZALEZ DELIVERS MODERATE SPEECH. PSOE FIRST SECRETARY FELIPE GONZALEZ, CERTAIN TO BE DISAPPOINTING THE MORE RADICAL DELEGATES IN ATTENDANCE, DELIVERED A NON-IDEOLOGICAL ADDRESS IN WHICH HE:
--CREDITED THE REFORM PROGRAM WITH HAVING RAISED THE GOVT' CREDIBILITY, BUT REITERATED HIS SUSPICIONS ABOUT ITS ULTIMATE INTENTIONS AND REAFFIRMED THE PSOE'S ADVOCACY OF ABSTENTION FROM THE REFERENDUM;
--STATED THAT THE PARTY WOULD MOVE NEITHER TOO FAR LEFT NOR TOWARD THE CENTER, AS MANY OF ITS OPPONENTS HOPED IT WOULD, AND REPEATED HIS COMMITMENT TO INCLUDE IN THE PARTY LARGE NUMBERS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS;
--ACKNOWLEDGED THE EXISTENCE OF A "CRISIS OF ADAPTATION" WITHIN THE OPPOSITION PLATAJUNTA, AND CALLED ONE AGAIN FOR A "CONSTITUTIONAL COMPROMISE" AMONG ALL DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION GROUPS TO REMAIN IN EFFECT THROUGH THE DRAFTING OF A NEW CONSTITUTION, AFTER WHICH THE PARLIAMENT TO BE ELECTED IN 1977 SHOULD BE DISSOLVED (STRONGLY IMPLYING THAT THE PSOE WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE 1977 ELECTIONS;
--MADE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE BROADENING OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR THE WORKING MAN; AND
--CAME DOWN HARD FOR PARTY UNITY, AN APPEAL TO WHICH THE ASSEMBLED DELEGATES RESPONDED ENTHUSIASTICALLY. (AT NO TIME DID GONZALEZ REFER TO SAPIN'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, NOR DID HE MENTION THE PCE.)

5. ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICERS. OF SIX DELEGATES ELECTED FROM THE FLOOR TO PRESIDE OVER THE CONGRESS UNTIL THE NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IS ANNOUNCED ON WEDNESDAY, FIVE WERE OLD SOCIALIST MILITANTS REPRESENTING THE PARTY'S LINK WITH THE PAST. THEY WERE LED BY UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS RAMON RUBIAL, WHO HAS SPENT NINETEEN YEARS IN PRISON FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THE ONLY EXCEPTION WAS PARTY ACTIVIST GREGORIO PECES BARBA, WHO WAS SELECTED VICE PRESIDENT

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IN A VERY CLOSE VOTE WHICH HAD TO GO TO A ROLL CALL TO BE DECIDED.

6. LOOKING TO DECEMBER 8. DECEMBER 6 AND 7 THE CONGRESS WILL BE DEVOTED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO CLOSED-DOOR COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOLLOWED, IN EACH CASE, BY AN EVENING PLENARY SESSION. ON DECEMBER 8, THE COMMITTEE REPORTS ARE TO BE MADE PUBLIC, THE NEWLY ELECTED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WILL BE PRESENTED, AND THE CONGRESS WILL ADJOURN. FELIPE GONZALEZ IS THE ODDS-ON FAVORITE TO CONTINUE AS FIRST SECRETARY AND MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE, WHILE THE COMMITTEE WILL BE EXPANDED, PERHAPS TO AS MANY AS 19 MEMBERS.

7. A FRENCH VIEW OF THE CONGRESS AND BEYOND. IN A PRIVATE EXCHANGE WITH THE AMBASSADOR DECEMBER 6, PSF SECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ROBERT PONTILLON EXPRESSED SATISFACTION

WITH THE ORDERLINESS AND BASICALLY MODERATE TONE OF THE CONGRESS
THUS FAR. HE WAS PARTICULARLY COMPLIMENTARY OF GONZALEZ'
SPEECH, CHARACTERIZING IT AS "ADDRESSED TO PRIME MINISTER
SUAREZ, NOT THE CONGRESS." HE ALSO INDICATED THAT HE DID
NOT BELIEVE THAT THE PSOE WOULD "CONCEDE ANYTHING TO THE
COMMUNISTS." LOOKING AHEAD, PONTILLON SAID HE THOUGHT THAT
THE PSOE WOULD "COME AROUND" ON THE QUESTION OF DEFENSE
AFFAIRS GENERALLY AND NATO IN PARTICULAR WHEN THE TIME
CAME SERIOUSLY TO ADDRESS THESE MATTERS. HE ADDED THAT THE
PSF INTENDED TO HELP THE PSOE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. STABLER

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